

i magazine
2000



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i magazine is a student literary publication of Mt. Wachusett Community College,
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P.S.

I wrote you those nice
poems only because
the honest ones
would frighten you.

-Jewel

Today is a Day of Great Joy

When they stop poems
in the mail and clap
their hands and dance to
them
when women become pregnant
by the side of poems
the strongest sounds making
the river go along
it is a great day
as poems fall down to
movie crowds in restaurants
in bars
when poems start to
knock down walls to
choke politicians
when poems scream and
begin to break the air
that is the time of
true poets that is
the time of greatness
a true poet aiming
poems and watching things
fall to the ground
it is a great day

Kim Peckham

I see you sitting there
Trying to remember these memories I gave you
But you drop the segments one by one
And you just don't know me anymore
Now, when I wrap my arms around you
You say I feel colder
Than the frost on winter graves
And you say my words are more bitter
Now that the hope I created has disappeared
So I try to depend on you
To ease this mourning of my mind
To ease this pain my dreams have left
And you try and try to make me right
You try to make me see
But I know where this road leads
And I know that soon I'll cease to be
So I look to you
And I want this all to go away
Here with you but all alone
I just need to hear you say
You'll hold me still
When the nightmares roar
You'll keep me sane
When I hit the floor
And that you'll always be there in the end
To pull me close as the illusions begin
And that you'll be with me to understand
To hear my screams and to hold my hand
So when the storm erupts and steals my hope
You can see me weaken and attempt to cope
And you can watch me stare without a sound
As my body crashes to the ground
So when night's collapsed
And all is calm
You can wait with me
For the dreary dawn
And you can hold me in a tight embrace
Of sorrow, loss, and eerie grace
And as I lay with you both limp and worn
You realize that my life was torn
So you try once again to understand
But your mind just cannot comprehend
So you're left there quiet and all alone
As the shadows take my body home
And once again you try to see
Exactly what was wrong with me

Aliisa Tornikoski

Moonlight Kisses

A Dedication to Rizwan Khan

Lay me out
upon the grassy terrain
moistened by moonlight kisses
Lap at my ears
while caressing my hair
freed by passion and wind
Gaze deeply into my eyes
explain your intentions
with looks of desire and devotion
Explore my body
above the ruffled clothes
that hide my secrets
Squeeze my hips
make me understand
your concern for my consent
Grab at my breasts
show me your haste
but be gentle with my fragility
Check in with my expression
to prove your respect
but do not hesitate
Doodle on my belly
using creative fingertips
add color with your tongue
Nibble at my hips
tickling my insides
make me scream and giggle
Embrace my body
tell me of your sincerity
hold me close and safe
Tease my thighs
with sweaty palms
have some fun with me
Anxiously undress me
make me feel the dewy moonlight kisses
upon my naked back and legs
Assure me we're alone
cover me with your body
burning with excitement
Run your hands down my back
as I assist you in
breathe on my neck

Allow my muscles to relax
smile at me
with lust in your eyes and love in your heart
Pump your emotions
into my trusting body
show me your reasons
Kiss my lips
while caressing my strands of wildness
bump into me
Release your tensions
allow yourself relief
let it flow warm and passionate
Grab at my shoulder blades
cold and wet
covered with uprooted grass
Relax your muscles
roll over upon the grassy terrain
moistened by moonlight kisses
Enjoy the moment
with the one you love
kiss my forehead
Hold my hot, naked body
in the darkness and rest with me
knowing it was only witnessed by the moon.

Stacy Downs

Journey

John Davick

Twelve boys stood in a haphazard line adjusting their equipment and trying as best they could to help one another. It was hot; it was always hot. It was raining; it was always raining. They kept their emotions to themselves, but their puzzled expressions spoke volumes. Questions continually crept into their minds. Basic Training, was eight weeks enough? Why didn't the more experienced soldiers ever talk about night patrols? The boys' ambivalent thoughts added to the queasiness that already held them captive. The minutes slowly ticked, their worries grew, and their anxiousness swelled, as they waited for the order to march.

As dusk began to shroud the earth with her blackness, they cautiously trod into her outstretched arms, taking their first steps into the unknown. Ten miles of hiking on this eve, was an exhausting trek, when senses had to be kept keen and the constant threat of the night loomed. Finally, the order for rest was given. A welcomed relief, twelve boys seized the opportunity to sleep, to dream of more pleasant surroundings, and temporarily escape from their suspected impending doom.

They lay fetal positioned in a muddy hole. The cold steel muzzle of the familiar M-16 pressed against their cheeks, an ever-present reminder of its purpose and their mission. The environment, not conducive to slumber, invited fear to take a strangle hold. Anxious concern effected excruciating emotional pain that twisted and slashed at the boys' innards like a plunged saber. They could not scream; that would break the unwritten vows of silence. They could not run; the limbs refused to obey. Their bodies trembled; their minds fought for control. Visions of loved ones, home, and gentler more serene places flashed into their consciousness. Something, anything was needed that could break the ungodly grasp that imprisoned their spirits.

The bombshells' horrendous reverberations broke the night silence, rattling the heavens. Immense flashes of light turned the darkness to day, unveiling the horror that surrounded them. Adrenaline pumped through their veins, motivating conditioned responses, acts of violence that under normal circumstances could only be considered detestable. The sharp popping sounds were repeated over and over, reminiscent not of corn over the fire, but of funeral salutes. All that was truly unholy was being realized. These events, a minute and a half in duration, will take an eternity to forget, but these memories will never lapse from consciousness. They will only be concealed.

Silence returned and cloaked the jungle. The boys fell on their knees; tears trickled down their cheeks, tears unseen. It was raining. The perspiration poured profusely from their brows; it was unnoticed. It was hot. Dawn gave light to another day. Eight men stood in an orderly line readying for their journey. Four boys reached the end of their path and rested in undisturbed slumber. It was hot; it was always--hot. And, it was raining; it was always--raining.

Sun Up

Night rolls into morning
the waking sun burns up the day
to its new shape
twisted and off color
Any presence of evening's insanity
or lurking shadows
now melts away in floods of light
like the great volcano Titan
releasing scorched anger
upon a sleeping world.

S. Davis

Come to me tenderly,
in hushed and quiet whispers
that trace your muffled steps leading to my door,
Come to me fervently,
let no one sense or see the passion
compelling me to want you more,
Come to me willingly,
with a heart inclined to savor my words
asking only in return for your faith and trust,
Take from me desperately,
the deep and most hidden side
that aches and burns for your searing touch,
Then give to me steadily,
your mounting strength and crushing weight
and rising rhythm of your labored breath,
And hold me ever tightly,
as you release the fire deep within
your sweat and mine infused in exalted caress,
And leave me then, aching silently,
to smell and taste love's teasing all alone
and return again to your own warm bed,
your life, your wife and your shattered home.

Denise Tagan

Releasing the Dragon

Christina Moschella

A FLASH OF WING

I was always different, unable to fit in, an outcast. I was the one who walked the outskirts, ignored by all until someone sought a target for some cruelty. Then I found my spotlight, under the taunts and insults of those who should have been my equals, or even my inferiors.

They couldn't understand my differences, my individuality, and that was frightening. That gave them reason to shun, to scorn, to poke fun and to torture.

I learned to find my own escapes, to take flight.

A SPARKLE OF OVAL SCALES

I remember being told that children follow the example of the adults, who they should mimic in order to learn. That was when I discovered that my childhood of repulsion was caused by adults, namely teachers. I was shunned and belittled by the very people every fiber and drop of red blood in my body ached to worship and learn from.

My mind thirsted for knowledge: a thirst they could quench, but the flask was held out of my reach, offered to others while I gasped alone. The dust of ignorance threatened to cover me, to dull me. I learned to avoid the cloud and glean my own truth, to shine with the facets of my own being.

A GLEAM OF IVORY TOOTH

I had to fight to survive, to be stronger than my peers. I had to claw my way out of the rut, the plot dug for me, and learn to bite back with words of my own when the taunts became too piercing. I discovered how to drown my torments and sorrows in the writings of others and realized that I could create life on the tip of my own pen. My creations, my worlds, fought my battles, let

me be myself, gave me the ability to truthfully smile.

A GLARE OF SERPENTINE EYES

I gave up the fight to fit in and turned my back on those who had long ago turned theirs on me. The untrusting, mocking stares that had haunted my childhood were returned threefold upon them. Only when I look at them, they don't know that I can see what they really are, no beauty, no strength, just wraiths who steal life from those who don't know how to protect themselves. I have learned such protection, and now they shrink away from a gaze that says that I just don't care anymore.

A WISP OF SMOKE FROM FLARED NOSTRIL

Years of hardship and loneliness have given me a new form, made me a new being. I am no longer weak and helpless, I no longer hide from cruel, twisted smiles and intentions. I am a dragon, I am strong and powerful. My fiery breath can burn their hatred to smoking cinders, my roar drowns out the irritating sound of their taunts and my soul is left clean and pure.

Fear and sadness are unknown to me for I hold the world in my fingers. I have been accepted by nature and trained in the will to fight back for what I believe in. I have learned to believe in me, to be me. Pouring my soul into the sacred knowledge that I am different, I have decided that I will never be like them, and that no longer bothers me.

A DRAGON CANNOT CONFORM

If You Should Go

And it will be as if a thousand steely knives are plunged into my heart,
and a colorless tear will form and drip from my eyes.
It will stream down my cheek dripping from my chin.
One foot will be to the North on the mountain and the other to the East in the sea,
and the tear will hit the dry land as many more flow, creating rivers, and streams,
flooding valleys, spiraling around and uprooting trees.
The skies will blacken and the earth will shake.
Lightening will plunge through my heart lacerating it open like the earth in a quake.
The wild birds of the heavens will fly forth from the breach,
And the untamed beasts of the land will stampede out, running for their very souls.
Snakes and the creeping and winged vermin of the land will blaze from my hair,
as the sea agitates in torment, thrashing about.
Suddenly silence will gesture.
All that will remain, in shades of gray, is the tiny Womanchild
lying exposed and naked, in a fetal curl, atop the black smoldering rubble,
hair decaying into the desolate land.
The tiny lifeless body, emaciated and curled tightly,
will hold in a narrow clenched hand a little crimson heart that is slowly beating down to die.
With every last breath she'll hold the tiny heart out to you
and whisper softly, "have mercy, have mercy", but no mercy will follow.
And the child's name will become "Sorrow".

Melanie Davis

Ambrosia
Chris Banahan

The room is dreary, not necessarily dark mind you, there *is* light but it is the light of a depressing overcast day. It looks ghoulish really.

To my left, the clock gives a reading of 10:28.

And I'm in my bed, wondering what I'm doing 'there.

What happened to everything?

...Oh yeah, I must have been dreaming.

Gargoyles, egg tanks, electric eels, theatre?

But it seemed so real.

And she was there. Not *that* she for those who know me, a different one, but it doesn't really derail the story even if you don't. She is she is she, the beat goes on...

She was there. I'll spare you the details as they were oh so very PG at best, which is kind of funny when you think about it. "In your dreams, loser." To which I can now respond "Yeah, I wish." You'd think your dreams would come true in your dreams, wouldn't you? But she was there.

Just to remind me of what I don't have.

I suppose it was coming, I suppose I *was* too much at peace with myself. I suppose it was only a matter of time before my dreams rose up against me. They affect me like that sometimes, my dreams. Just when I think I've got somebody out of my head, I'll do this and they'll shoot right back in as if they just went to the store to pick up some milk and eggs. Just when the emotional stuff starts to go away it happens and I find myself once again burdened with emotions that will never find gratification and tied down with desires that can't be placated.

It was just a dream

But it felt so real.

There were other times, but this time was particularly cruel. So rarely in your dreams do you find yourself questioning the reality around you, but not this time. I remember clearly, looking at my script, trying to memorize my lines mere moments before show time, saying "This isn't like all of those dreams, this is real." I've never told myself a dream was real before. I should have known better, if it were real, I wouldn't have gotten the girl.

I felt her lips, I felt them against mine, dammit!

And then I woke up, feeling like Tantalos after meeting Persephone. Cruelly reminded of what I can never have.

One taste is all I get, just enough to whet my appetite.

Umbo

- I. I am
a convoluted bird, sprawled
and skewed and
fossilized.
- II. Awake or asleep, the clam
just sits there, small and still,
spreading shadow on the counter,
its umbo a small concentrically ridged hill.
"Umbo," I say, "goddamn."
I laugh and the clam grins uneasily.
- III. I am a leaden slug, a vulpine angel, water in a pitcher
next to a well,
cold and
lucid and
encased in glass,
which is a liquid
after all.

The Lesson

Amanda Ducharme

"Oh, please teach me something. I promise I won't break it or anything." I squeak as I yank the guitar out of his hands and place it firmly on my crossed-legged lap. "At least not on purpose."

Sighing, in possibly an exasperated manner, he rearranges himself upon the stone wall so now we're touching. One small set of practically brand new, worn-almost-everyday for the past month, cargo-pants covered knees rubbing the biggest, knobbyest ancientest looking corduroy-patched covered knees. He points his long dirty, but only under the nails, fingers at the strings.

"Put your fingers here, here and here."

"Like this?"

"No, that finger there."

"My hand doesn't bend like that. Are you sure that's where it's supposed to go?"

"Yes," sighing again, "Now strum only these strings."

"Why not all?"

"It won't sound right."

"Oh." I do as instructed and this wonderful sound comes out of the same little guitar that I just happen to be holding. Thoroughly, pleasantly surprised I look up and smile. I take my itty bitty hands off the guitar and put them back on in the same manner and strum. Again the beautiful sound happens and I smile, ear to ear, glee escaping from the inside out.

"Show me another," I whisper in an attempt to contain my ever growing excitement. However, my so far wonderful teacher has not answered me or moved yet.

"Pleeeeeeeeeeease?" I super sweetly whine as I lean over the guitar and get in his face.

"Huh. Oh, get down. Put your fingers here, here and here." This time he placed them there with his hands.

"What were ya thinkin'?"

He shakes his head and shrugs, "Nothing."

"Come on, you can tell me." I put my hand on his knee, "I won't laugh at you. I promise."

He looks at my hand then looks up at me as if I've sprouted wings or something stranger and leans into my face and places a big mushy kiss squarely on my lips. I try to back up but with the guitar in my lap and the stonewall under my fanny I haven't many places to go. I just press my lips tightly together and stare at his forehead. Once he backed away, I'm sure I blushed, but I still handed him back his guitar.

"Um...I'm going home now. See you tomorrow." I quickly, lightly hug him, "Thanks for the lesson." I pick up my almost heavier than myself schoolbag and walk not too fastly to my car.

Undertow

At ten I knew I had been a mermaid
I had vivid dreams and memories
of secret caverns and cool lagoons
with barnacle crusted rocks
where seaweed and shells and starfish
lay strewn upon fine white sand
where I gathered treasures and wove tapestries
of siren songs and lonely sailors
half-sightless and bewildered
reaching outstretched arms
through foggy sea-spray
All this I knew and remembered
as I woke tasting salt and oysters.

In this new life the sea calls to me
beckoning and tempting like long lost love
while I remain required on shore
watching my children cavort in the waves
from birth they have swum like dolphins
I want to tell them
it's because your mother was a mermaid
but I don't want to frighten them
and I early on learned not to speak
of such nonsense to others
the shocked eyes and whispers
the uncomfortable laughter the hushing
the feelings of shame that wash over
and so I can't speak of my secret
But I can tell them bedtime tales of mermaids
of secret caverns and cool lagoons
of briny deep indigo smooth slippery flutter
and I can dive naked into water in the moonlight
and remember

Kim Peckham

The River

The river, frozen, called out to me--
to tread upon its icy fingers
and leap across great jagged cracks
as if to challenge roaring currents
below the glassy mirrored surface
I think of how you, like the river
were treacherous, wild and cunning,
frozen in fragments, with torrents of youth
coursing through your defiant veins
You, who could maneuver
from slippery stone to narrow inlet
never making so much as a splash
or ripple in your stride,
And I, watching from farthest shore
stood; afraid to move, afraid to dare
never releasing my hold
lest the rush should threaten
to pull me under...
And when you reached the other side,
I saw green leaves budding
on winter limbs all around you;
I saw wreaths of sunlight surround
your mane of dark curls
as confident shoulders turned
toward eternal summer...
Only I lagged behind
stagnant at the water's edge,
encased in winter's lingering grip...
Stepping lightly now,
I arrive once more
on a bitter frozen bank
looking for remnants of springtime promise,
under the bleak cover of January skies
ever so much more than twenty...

Denise Tagan

Hunting the Unicorn

Christina Moschella

It has been written that the unicorn is the guardian of light, pure and good, more beautiful than sunrises and waterfalls and more innocent than the youngest child. Only the pure of heart and soul can find a unicorn and more often, the unicorn finds them. It dwells deep in the forests, where it watches over the animals, protecting them from harm for more years than can be recorded.

I remember the feel of the forest that day, hours after leaving my home and starting my hunt. It felt more alive than usual, more real. The tree bows waved softly in the gentle breeze, sighing over my tousled head and dropping green veined leaves all around. I heard the rustle of these leaves as I walked, they blanketed the forest floor and fell back into place as I moved on, obscuring any sign of my passing, as though I had never been there.

I walked along a path that hardly existed; it was worn so lightly in the green of the grass, and I felt that I was the first person to see this part of the forest in years.

As I passed a large pine tree I heard the warning chatter of a squirrel. Turning to catch a glimpse, I saw a flash out of the corner of my eye. Spinning around, I let my breath out in a sigh; nothing was there, not even a squirrel. Laughing softly at my mistake I continued on my way.

My bare feet shuffle through dry, orange pine needles. They soften my footsteps so the only sound heard is the soft whistling of the wind through the trees. More needles fall around me, tickling my skin and dusting my hair.

A noise to my left catches my attention and I turn to see a doe and two fawns standing nearby. The doe is wary of this stranger in her forest but the fawns are full of curiosity. The filtered sunlight ripples off their spotted coats, turning them from the color of ripe wheat to shades of yellow and then cinnamon. Their brown eyes are so deep and soft that I am reminded of melted chocolate. I want to reach out and stroke their slender muzzles but the doe is still nervous so I stand still, hands held out to show I mean no harm.

Eventually she relaxes and begins to nibble the branches of nearby trees. The fawns frisk around her and I stand there, a silent witness, noticing all but disturbing nothing. They dance between the bushes and trees, tiny cloven hooves skipping through pine needle and stirring up tiny clouds. Their playfulness is endearing and for a moment I see in them the mystical being that I am hunting.

Then, the doe lifts her head, snorts out a tiny breath and flees back into the forest. The fawns follow and they melt into the trees, moving so swiftly that one could hold the notion that they had never even been there.

I sigh, disappointed. It is my fault they took flight. So enchanted by the dancing of the fawns, I hadn't realized that I was holding my breath until it burned in my lungs and I had to gasp for air. The sudden sound had startled the doe and she decided to move to safer grounds. My sigh echoes through the suddenly empty forest and I move on.

Once again I walk through the forest, the wind singing songs to the trees in my wake, my flowing skirt swishing around my ankles.

Suddenly I see a silvery flash through the trees and my heart quickens in my chest. Could it be...? I hurry forward, eager to catch a glimpse of the wonder I have sought to see for my entire life. I rush through the trees, my heart pounding wildly, and...step out onto the grassy bank at the side of a pond.

Sunlight streams down on the water, creating the silvery glow that had led to my misperception.

I feel tears rise in my eyes, for a moment I had been so close. I drop down in the grass and wipe my eyes on my sleeve. The sun is hot here, and my clothing is melded to my body. From my vantage point the water looks so cool and blue and refreshing. It's just the thing to lift my spirits.

Standing again, I wade into the water until it reaches my hips, then dive in. It feels better than I had even imagined, crisp and cold, and clearer than crystal. My long, blonde hair is swept away from my eyes and my skin feels cleaner than it has all day. Turning on my back I float, staring up at the wispy clouds and smiling at the wilderness laughter of a single, solitary loon.

As I drift closer to shore I feel eyes upon me. I turn my head slightly and gasp. It's watching me from the bank of the pond, eyes dark and solemn. The sunlight seems to have faded in contrast to the silver sheen of its glossy coat. I sit up in the water and take my first real look at the unicorn. Starlight seems to have originated in its eyes and the mane and tail flow like the softest swan down. And the horn. A single spiral reaching to the heavens, it glows like ivory, mother-of-pearl and moonlight on a clear night. Legends have told of its magical properties but all that knowledge, so carefully studied and memorized, has been wiped clean from my mind like a slate stroked with a wet cloth. The unicorn is more magnificent than any scholar could ever write on paper.

As I stare, spellbound by its beauty, the unicorn steps forward, moving with a grace that the doe and fawns would envy. It's golden hooves shine in the sun and cast off rainbows like the spray at the bottom of a waterfall. It walked into the water, moving toward me with the confidence of those who know they are safe and loved. Then it began to sing.

For several long moments I stand, trapped by the music I have heard all day. The unicorn's song is like that of the wind moving softly through the trees. As the wondrous creature lowered its graceful head to nuzzle my shoulder I realized that some of the legends are true. The unicorn is seen only by whom it chooses and this time it chose me. All the time I had listened to the sighing of the wind, I was being followed by a unicorn. All the beauty I had witnessed in the forest, the glory of nature, had been the unicorn testing my soul.

The soft touch on my shoulder and the gentle, warm breath on my milky skin tells me that I have been found worthy. My heart soars higher than the eagles and the clouds, as I timidly reach out a hand to stroke the glossy, silvery-white hair of the mane. It moves through my fingers like silk and I find myself laughing. Joy surges through my body as the unicorn joins me, lifting its voice to mingle with mine and fill the forest with music.

My heart light and happy, I step out of the water and allow the unicorn to lead me back to the castle. The trees seem to bow down as we walk by and I glimpse the doe and her fawns regarding me with silent, trusting eyes. I have found favor with the forest. And I have learned that one cannot leave home in hopes of finding a unicorn, one can only dream of a unicorn finding them.

Tallahassee Girl

Tallahassee Girl
she wears the mask of truth
upon her face, so tender,
olive skin with rich southern tan
Almond shaped eyes
Dark + Deep
they view her world
and gently weep.
Tallahassee Girl
like Daughter of Beauty
or Sister of Hope,
faith guides her hand, faith
that is of life
Mind & Soul
bonding together
in the name of one goal,
To live. Oh sweet world
to live by the sunset of each day.
Tallahassee Girl
Rose of May
follow her
she knows the way

S. Davis

Loneliness

Matthew Richardson

I'm lonely. I wake up lonely. I go to bed lonely. I try to pierce the barrier. I do. I really do. But just when I think I cross the threshold, the parted veil seems to bind again and once more I'm lost in the dark.

I look into people's eyes. I listen to voices, soft and hard. But how true is the emotion behind the eye, the inflection within the word? I can never know. I know – or do I really know? – that beneath the hair, beneath the skin, within the skull, within the brain, that somewhere there is a soul. But can I ever touch it?

I want to float in the souls of others. I want to swim in the souls of others. There comes a time in even the most closeted person's life when he realizes that to be alone one more day may mean he no longer exists. So you seek out others. Slowly. Fumbling every step of the way. Barely understanding these new sensations. You're tempted to hide, to pull the venetian blinds down and close out those slivers of light and wisps of air. But the light looks so bright and the air tastes so fresh. The rawest of nerves may be exposed, but you want to bask in the sun and feel the sweet air on your face.

But...how far can you crawl outside yourself? Even with curtains pulled wide open, you can almost taste the souls of others. But then you realize that the window is still closed. You see other people, people you'd like to love, beyond the glass and inches away. You scream. You yell. You scratch. You claw. You start to feel it's useless, that the glass must be sound-proof. Or that they don't see you. Or they daren't be caught looking at you. Or that they're ignoring you. My God, am I really that alone?

But occasionally, someone will look right at you. If you're extremely lucky, they might even smile. Or utter a little chuckle. But then they begin to speak and it suddenly seems so pointless. "Hi." "How are you?" "Good film last night." "Great." We talk in circles. Through. Around each other. But are we ever really understood? Do we even *want* to understand?

But still, I keep on trying. I *want* to understand. I *want* to connect. But I'm starting to wonder...is it possible? Really, *really* possible? I really want to know. I want to know if there's much of a difference between being alone and being lonely. I don't mind being alone. I do mind being lonely. And I am lonely. Lonely, lonely, lonely.

Letting Go...

I jump away
bungee strapped 'round my waist
In the drop I feel frightened,
 scared wanting you
to grab me and safely pull me in
You watch me drop--
 confident how bungees work
Just before I reach solid ground
 I'm jerked back to you

I run down the circular path
In the run I feel sad,
 dizzy, wanting you
to hold me and steady my pace
You watch me go--
 confident how circular paths work
Just before I set my goal
I run right back to you

I tell you I will fly away
On the ground I feel shaky,
 powerless, wanting you
to gently cover me in the nest
You watch me lift off--
 confident how wingless birds fly
Just before I soar
I stumble back to you

I tell you I am letting go
With empty hands I feel strong,
 free, watching you
drift far, far away
You become smaller and smaller,
 I feel confident--
knowing a tiny spec will soon disappear
 I nourish my soul

Melanie Davis

Regret

Insides are turning, visions are burning

holes inside my brain

Constant ticking...time keeps chipping

solid thoughts to shattered grains,

Always sighing, I keep relying

on things that used to be

Clearly remembering, intently forgetting

the obvious facts to see...

Time is slipping, the day is quitting

soon night will flash away

Straight to tomorrow, bearing the sorrow

from things we said today

Denise Tagan

The EverRage

It has come to my attention recently
That I have the unique pleasure and pain
Of being me.
So many wonderful things,
I could name them all on a thumbnail if the thought so pleased me.
But all positive aspects of life
End the second I step out of my house
End the moment I exit the world.
It comes to a stop when universes collide
Yours always wins...
Yours, yours with the people.
You know the type, you know the sort and the kind,
The kind I am nothing to.
The kind I like to call everyone,
Sadly, they're everywhere.
Oh, to be rid of them would be a rapture I alone could enjoy.
(one of the few perks of being me, might I add).
But, it isn't to be.
I'm sure when I wake up tomorrow morning and drive to school,
I'll have to see them on the sidewalks and smell them in the air.
And drive behind them at speeds lower than I usually travel.
And their drivel I'll be forced to listen to
Just as an unfortunate consequence of getting out of bed.
But there are those even worse...
The type to which I am nothing AND everything to.
The string-pullers and the choreographers,
The petty dictators and the skin-suited gods.
The gears of the mechanical grindstone,
That shall crush me into dust.
The world is theirs, I simply live here.
One of the reasons I don't like this place,
All of the best is savored by only the worst.
(little wonder your belief in divine judgement).

But gee, by golly gee,
Maybe once they're done with my withered and three-quarters dead carcass,
They can give me a watch.
A pretty watch,
And I can grab the pretty mechanical doohikey with my arthritic hands,
And turn the hands backwards.
And turn back the ages.
And with that watch get back all they have taken from us.
Beauty,
Honor,
Respect,
Soul,
Or more likely I'll just set the time off,
And say "Sonuvabitch, it didn't work".
And proceed to drop dead.

Chris Banahan

And there I was
Not speaking
As I once had
Or as I once wanted to
I couldn't remember which it was
I couldn't remember your face
Or the words to the song you wrote for me
And I couldn't remember how it felt
When you wrapped your arms around me
I suppose you were wrong
When you said
"I'll soon be just a memory"
An ironic truth
But I couldn't remember why

Aliisa Tornikoski

Subway Souls

Matthew Richardson

It was a surreal subway ride. That's the only way I can describe it. Down the strange forward drag of the elevator. Through the lock and click-clock of a toll booth. Down a set of solid steps. Down a long dark tunnel lit by a thin fluorescent light.

The subway train slides to a stop. Doors hiss open. I step aboard. It is almost empty. I slink down in the seat nearest the door. In the dim light of the tunnel beyond the bright glare of the train lights, I see vague posters pasted on the fat gray wall.

We start moving. I lurch forward as the train lurches forward. I clutch a solid metal pole, forcing my weight back into its proper place. An odd pressure fills the room. Walls whiz past outside the window. Grey becomes black. My hollow image reflects in the window against the garish light.

The train slows, stops. Doors hiss open. Expressionless passengers board at this stop, crowding me into an ever-smaller space. I grasp the cold silver post, my own face blank as I assess these other blank faces. Some read books. Some chat with strangers. But most everyone ignores everyone else.

With another fit and start, the train slows at the next stop. Some filter out. Many more filter in. Young; old; vibrant; staid. I guess what they say is true... in the city, you really do meet all kinds. I'm pressed into an even smaller space. Faces vanish. It's all a collage of bodies now, and air tainted by cigarette breath and burned rubber. The world seems to implode around me. The train dips deeper into the earth. On a parallel track, just beyond my hollow reflection, the fat dark wall parts. That strange pressure becomes heavier and heavier as we lurch to the left, and I realize we're moving onto another track. As someone moves out of my way, I see the window again. Beyond my hollow reflection, I see another subway train. On a parallel, just as fast, and travelling in the opposite direction. I see a blur of bodies crammed in just as I am. I look around at the sea of shapes and sizes and endless faces. And I realize, I say to myself, so many lives. So many stories to tell. So many souls I'll never know. Fate has brought us together for a few minutes on the train. I go, they come. They go, I come. Either way, we'll never see each other again.

At last the train begins to tilt. We are heaving upward, fighting gravity, finding the light. The gray-blue light of a rainy, foggy day parts the gray and black darkness. The train spans steel and concrete as we pass over a bridge, coming to the end of our journey. Rain and fog obscure the horizon, which was already half-hidden by the choppy waves. Through the rain and fog I see the half-hidden steel and concrete buildings, the unquestionable sign of a city.

The train stops. The doors hiss open. One by one, we file out. I stand upon the cement and tar, and watch them all disperse. I suck in the damp chill air as they scatter in a thousand different directions. And I wonder if such thoughts as mine have crossed their minds. Have they ever wondered what's behind that stranger's eye? Or are they as deadened as their blank and joyless eyes? Is this the product of the cramped and crawly city? Does no one think of anyone else in such a place. We're all bound for a moment, or not even a moment. Bound for the same place, but only for a moment. Isn't that sad, or is it just the way of the world?

Even now, so soon after, I can't remember their faces. Of the few words they spoke, their sounds and words are gone. Even the feel of the place is slipping away from me. Is this how it always is, to ride the subway? Having lived it once, I'm not sure I would want to do it all the time. No, I wouldn't want to be a subway soul.

Ugh. Left side. 2:13am the clock glows in red. Blink. Blink. Blink. The dots separating hours from minutes with seconds. That's it. Out the window. Covers now at the foot of my bed, humped like i should be, asleep. Black hoodie over grey tank top, keep my upper body warm. Old, beat up, held together with safety pins and duct tape, trusty chucks over my naked toes. Red plaid flannel jammie bottoms are good enough for pants. Close the door so if my little sisters wake up they will not see me missing. Mmph, the window's sticky again. Wiggle, wiggle, wiggle. i'm free. Feet first, belly on the sill, toes touching the garage roof. Empty, blue, iced tea bottle propping the window open so i can get back in. Like a cat i move over the scratchy shingles, down the back side. Umph, hands on cold damp wood of back deck. i'm crouched like a runner, how appropriate. High speed dash across the yard. Graceful, like a white tailed deer, i jump over the brook separating the mowed lawn from the crunchy leaves of the forest. Tree, tree, tree, quick to the left to avoid the tip of a rock. i look up, stars stare blankly down at me through the shuffling branches. Ow! Branch to the face. i stop. Hands on knees, breathing hard. i can see my breath, steamy white puffs, disintegrated by the chill autumn air. The stars look at me confused now, whispering to each other about my next move. Only they know i'm out here. One good sized cleansing breath. In the nose, hold, 1...2...3, out the mouth. i breath in again, this time through my mouth. i breath in the sharp cold air, the pointy naked branches of the trees, the black spaces in the sky between the stars. i scream. i scream wordless, from the bottom of my toes, the bottom of my soul. i scream now for all the times i should have screamed but did not. i scream for a night that never should have happened. i scream for promises made and not kept. i scream for friendships lost. i scream at the trees. i scream at the sky. i scream and i scream and scream and scream, over and over, until nothing more than a shadow of a creak can be heard. Light headed i wobble home. Feeling tired and clean, i pull the covers over my head and breathe out.

Amanda Ducharme

Cult Flambé

Melanie Davis

INGREDIENTS:

One authoritarian leader

A handful of people who are searching for the meaning of life

A dash of organization

One closed system (Members are not to question authorities or beliefs within the cult)

A set of rules, spoken or unspoken, that members are required to follow

One smattering of unique terms, known only to the group

A pinch of haughtiness disguised as humility

One lb. of self-discipline

A bunch of bologna

One liter of guilt and shame

Start with *one authoritarian leader*, male or female. For a stronger cult we prefer you use a male. Choose one who has a fully ripened desire to power over others, combined with the subtle aroma of manipulation.

Next, stir in your second ingredient, *the handful of people*, best found among the lonely and inexperienced, and seasoned with intelligence. They must be empty emotional shells, so they can be stuffed with the *bologna* your leader feeds them. The more members you add, the stronger the cult.

After you have these, the basis of your cult, you may begin to slowly add your remaining ingredients. *A dash of organization* is extremely important. With this you can now develop your system.

Take *your liter of guilt and shame* and slowly pour about 1/3 of it into your *closed system*. This will prevent the members from questioning the beliefs. Set the remainder of *guilt and shame* aside for later use.

Cut your leader's work in half by having the members screen new prospects. Blend the members into the outside community. Add your *pinch of haughtiness*, this way they will stiffen into model citizens. Glaze them with *humility* for the reputation of your cult to stay intact.

Now you may stir in your *set of rules*. This will cause instant fermentation and confusion. Present the rules as spiritual, above human intellect. Take your *smattering of unique terms*, season to taste. You may use any of the following, or gather your own to give it a unique full-bodied flavor:

The End of the World

Chosen Ones

Life after Death

Spirituality

Now that you have a strong base, you can begin to divide your members from their families and community. Isolation, even if just emotionally, is mandatory.

Knead in your *lb. of self-discipline*. This will help your members to give up healthy desires and yearnings. Raise the temperature of your leader by giving him the women and children for his own sexual gratification.

To make your cult complete and ready to serve, stuff the members with the *bunch of bologna* that their physical bodies are just a shell. Give them a plan for mass suicide. Have your cult leader pour over the remaining *guilt and shame*. Ignite.

Bon appetit!

Are you Satan?

Are you Satan?

For you tempt my soul,
calculating and smooth
like the serpent of Eden,
ever ready to take possession
to hold my existence, dangle it
between your fingers
like sand through an hourglass; down,
down into the infinite Desert of Solitude
Temptations of Love trickle from your tongue
as I desperately try to catch them
in cracked china cups.

S. Davis

August, 1967

Not since childhood
and those summer nights
on the screened porch
with the ripple of voices
like river water
running from house to house
and children's shouts reclaiming
the kingdom of grass
while the huge moon hung
like a caged balloon
in the arms of the tallest oak
and how it seemed
even the stars leaned down
to sing in that night chorale--
not since then have I seen
such light and shadow play
of fireflies flashing
from lawn and leaf
their intermittent blessings

Kim Peckham

You told me, and I believed

Stacy Downs

You told me that you liked me, that you would cherish me as yours. I believed you and searched for love no more. You told me that you were honored that I would take the chance with you, and leave all others behind. I believed you and assured you that I felt certain that I had made the right choice. We laughed, and cried, and danced, and cuddled for hours that seemed to have no end. We romanced and bickered and teased, and comforted each other until we felt the others needs were met. You told me it would be forever, that you wanted no one else. I believed and trusted your words as only a lover would. You told me that she was just a friend who needed a friend like you. She had so much to say and you had time to listen, but it was all being done as friends. I believed you and sat by patiently, trying to be understanding of any space you may need. You told me you had never had a girlfriend good as me. I believed you and prided myself with the compliment. You told me that you were all about me and there was nobody new. I believed you and continued to let my love grow for you with each day that we had. You told me that she was lying, that you were not with her. I believed you and let my anger beat at her wildly as my heart beat for you. Then, you told me the truth, that you were in love, but not with one, but two. I believed and gave you the time and space to make whatever decision was right for you. You told me that you had chosen her, and I could not believe....

Calling the Phoenix

I stare at naked trees
sit on the bare earth
feel the death of the world around me
The death sits heavy in my soul
I am worn and tired
sick of life and its burdens
The wind picks up
blowing leaves in my hair
prickling my bare skin
It brings with it the scent of spices
heady, strong, exotic
and the breeze is no longer cold
I twist around, stare up at the trees
my head is swimming with strange sounds
I am alone no more
The bird sits above me
in a nest that makes branches bend
singing softly
Colors ripple over feathers
purple, gold, scarlet, blue
it preens, then explodes into flame
My eyes water with heat
flames lick high to the clouds
filling the sky with color
Too soon they die
like the world around me, the nest is gray
like the sky, life is dull, meaningless
Noises again, soft cries, gentle mews
the nest moves, the ashes shift
the bird arises from death
It spreads vibrant wings to flight
circles the sky, turns it azure
lands at my side, grass springs from its claws
Beautiful, all I see is beautiful
born of gray and absence of life
pure innocence and color
It bows once, returns to the sky
my soul lifts, my heart sours on scarlet wings
I feel clean, new, whole for the first time
Jumping to my feet, shouting its name
thanking it for the truth
for my new being
From death, life is always started anew
and I call to the Phoenix
for it gave me life

Wants and Desires

Desire---I do not care to feel it;
neither ecstasy, nor romance,
nor quickening heartbeat,
nor steaming blood coursing
its way through my veins.
Not for me the bone-melting glances,
the trembling, hesitant touch,
or the private murmuring of two voices
in accord with the the moment.

Too often in my life have these
been the false prophets of Happily Ever After,
insinuating themselves into seldom-attained,
but oh-so-appreciated Perfect Aloneness,
draining away my hard-won independence
and turning "me"
into something I may not wish to be.

At this point in my journey
I want but little,
a warm hug of comfort,
a whisper of assurance,
the affection of a few real friends,

And that's enough.

Jeanne Hue

Scars

Matthew Richardson

I want to see your scars. Why do you hide them? They're a part of you. Part of me. Part of all of us. So why do you withdraw into the folds of yourself? I see you try to hide them. But little cracks appear in your veneer. A little flinch. A faltering step. A long and shuddering sob. Your jaw tightens. You try that much harder to hide it.

I see your scars. They're not so ugly. Why are you ashamed? Why do you lower your eyes? The pain? Beneath the scar, beneath your soft and silky skin, is the pain still stirring? Pain. Far away, it feels so dull. But when you swim inside it...it's hot, and dark, and screaming.

Let me touch your scars. You squirm. You smile. See? I'm not that cold. A single tear wells in the corner of your eye, and I know you're glad I've felt that pulse. I lift my hand and caress your cheek. Your warm and happy tears spill upon my wrist.

At last, we come apart. I see you clutch your scars. You hesitate, torn between sweet bright air and smothering layers of darkness. Taste the air, little lost soul. Taste the air.

Take a Chance

Tobias Bassett

Maybe it was the first time she said her name. Or maybe it was the way she said her name. Or maybe it was the way her thin, yet tempting lips moved when she said her name. Whatever it was...it was. She had you. Right from the start, she had you. She had you whenever and however she wanted. Maybe it was from all those times you were looking at her and she caught you-- or when she was looking at you and you caught her. Whatever it was...it was.

How did this start? When did this start? Was it when she said "Hi" to you in the hallway and you smiled hi back? Did it start from innocent thoughts? Did she start this or did you? Was she from a past life... or a future life perhaps? Was it when you told her she looked good in that shirt, when you were really thinking she would look better with it off? Or was it when she told you she liked those pants on you, and you thought she would like them better with them off?

You know what it is like, you've been there before. When you're with her and you want to say so many things but you can't, or you don't because you don't want to screw anything up. Not that there is "anything" to be screwed up, but still you don't want to take that chance. So you sit in silence for minutes at a time, both staring at the same blade of grass in front of you, both waiting for the other to make that first, yet possible the most important move of you lives. And finally there are words. You know the words like "what a nice day", and "it's supposed to be nice all week." Words that don't represent anything, except the passage of time...a delay of sorts. The kind of talk that goes on for hours, with nothing of real importance being said. You know the talk, the talk that isn't needed, when all you have to do is look in her eyes and catch the look from her. You know the look, the look where you want her to look and then she does and you're supposed to look away, but you don't and neither does she-- because you both realize that enough time has been wasted. Then she places her hand on your knee, and you lean towards her and she leans towards you... Whatever it was, it was.

The Passing of April

Michael Talarico

November sat on a bench in the park, mourning the passing of April. She was the only one. She had the ability to quell the raging inferno within his mind. Her broken china voice used to wake him those spring mornings, the sun would filter through the window shades and turn the light into cream around them. April's mother had sent him a letter telling him of her departure from this plain, and "will you attend the funeral?"

He needed her now. The air in the park was turning cold and the rain clouds were upon him. The air was no surprise. The air had always been cold since he himself had lost April. Now the world lost April, and November believed that it would be on the verge of rain for all eternity.

Then, as he tilted his head to the ground, he noticed a seraph had lost something. A little girl strolled into view in front of him. She was a little girl in a little red dress with scarlet ribbons in her golden hair. She did not notice him watching her. Probably better that way.

"Will you attend the funeral?" The question resonated through him.

November closed his trench coat. The air was damn near unbearable.

He watched the girl again. She sniffed the air and smiled. November heard her giggle. The little girl put her arms out to her sides and twirled around and around. She began moving in something like a figure eight. He watched her with his mouth open in an astonished smile.

The sky groaned and the clouds broke and rain fell upon them.

"No." November said quietly. He looked upward to the sky and his smile began to fade. "not her," he begged the clouds, "leave her alone." He brought his eyes back down to the girl.

"Will you attend the funeral?"

She felt the chilling rain come down on her and the shock had stopped her dancing. November feared that the sky had gotten to her.

She looked back up with a smile of triumph on her face. She laughed and began to dance again. November's eyes were like those of an infant and he was able to find a smile again. The rain fell on his closed raincoat. He looked at the buttons.

November began to unbutton his coat. He opened it and let the rain fall on his chest. He watched the girl. He put his head up and opened his mouth to take a drink.

"Will you attend the funeral?"

No, November thought. I won't. Because she's not dead. He looked at the girl. She was giggling again.

November laughed. He put his head up and drank some more rainwater.

He sat on the bench no longer mourning the passing of April. He sat and drank the rain and watched the angels dance.

Don't blame me... I can't help myself.

Don't blame me
if I stare at you just a little too long,
and if I hold the glance, searching your eyes for answers unknown.
Don't blame me
if my daydreams carry me to the future,
and if I hope that it is filled with wedding bells and baby cries.
Don't blame me
when I admit to friends that I've stopped looking,
convinced that I have already found the best.
Don't blame me
if I mention your name and brag about you incessantly,
I can't think of anything better to talk about.

I can't help myself
from thinking about you, day and night,
while I'm awake and when I sleep.
I can't help myself
from watching you at every window and across every room,
you catch my attention from every angle.
I can't help myself
from craving your every touch, holding you for "just a few more minutes"
and begging you for one more kiss.
I can't help myself
from worrying about you on your drive home each night,
reminding you to buckle up and "watch out for crazies".

Don't blame me
if I get a little giggly at just a simple glance, I try to hold it in,
but sometimes you have no idea how cute you really are.
Don't blame me
when I keep you up late at night,
I just love the intimacy of the dark at night.
Don't blame me
if I miss you before you're gone,
I just hate when we're apart.
Don't blame me
if I can't keep my hands off of you,
I want to be sure you are always there for me

I can't help myself
from being curious, when you float off with a daydream,
Are you thinking of me?
I can't help myself
from asking questions
I want to know everything there is to love.
I can't help myself
from getting a little jealous when you look at her,
What do you see?
I can't help myself
from hugging you just a little too tight and kissing you a few extra times
I just can't get enough.
Don't blame me if I Love You... I can't help myself.

Stacy N. Downs

